



# Guardian

America's First Choice for Environmental Restoration

A Publication of the Environmental Restoration Program

Travis Air Force Base, California

April 2014

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To say that the Travis AFB Groundwater ROD is important to the cleanup of groundwater beneath the base would be a huge understatement. Mr Mark Smith, Travis AFB Restoration Program Manager, adds his thoughts on this decision document and its immediate future.....2

### Next RAB Meeting:

The next scheduled Restoration Advisory Board meeting will be held on October 23, 2014 at 7 p.m. at the Office of the Northern Solano County Association of Realtors. The meeting agenda is forthcoming.....4

### Editor's Corner

It's been almost a full year since the Travis AFB Restoration Advisory Board (RAB) met to discuss cleanup issues and provide feedback on our cleanup program. The October 2013 meeting was cancelled as a result of the federal furlough, and after consulting with most of the RAB members, we postponed the April 2014 meeting until the future of the Travis AFB Groundwater Record of Decision (ROD) becomes clear. Once all parties sign the ROD, we will reschedule the RAB meeting to discuss the final selected remedies and the path forward. The October 2014 meeting is still on the schedule.



(Photos by Gail Ackerman, Wildlife Manager)

**Meet the New Resident:** For years, base officials were told that the California Tiger Salamander could be a part of the ecosystem on Travis AFB, but no one had ever seen one of these secretive amphibians. That changed early this year, when this guy was found walking across the flight line.

## There's a New Breed in Town

### Elusive Species Spotted Along Travis Flight Line

By Glenn Anderson

Travis Environmental Project Manager

The "critter list" for Travis AFB just got a little longer.


Earlier this year, a base wildlife manager was working to keep birds away from the airfield when she saw an unusual sight. Crawling on the concrete was a species of salamander that had never been found on the base. Until now.

The California Tiger Salamander (CTS) is a relatively large amphibian that is native to our state. Black in color with yellow or cream spots, it has a stocky body that can grow up to 8 inches in length.

What makes this amphibian special is its

use of vernal pools for breeding. Vernal pools are temporary pools of water that form during the wet winter months. They are considered a type of wetland that provide habitat for unique plants and animals.

They spend most of their lives in the burrows of other animals. When enough rain falls to fill up a vernal pool, they migrate to the nearest pool to lay their eggs, which hatch in about two weeks. Because they can only live near areas with vernal pools, and as a result of non-native predators that feed on them, they have been designated as a threatened and/or endangered species.

Currently, base officials are working with environmental agencies to provide protection for the CTS while still allowing essential construction projects to proceed. If you see another CTS on base, please let us know! 

Visit our Environmental Restoration Program web site at <http://www.travis.af.mil/enviro>



Travis Air Force Base, California

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Jim Dunbar, *City of Fairfield*

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The *Guardian* is published by the Air Force Civil Engineer Center's Western Region Restoration Support Team, located at Travis Air Force Base. The newsletter is designed to inform and educate the public about the ongoing environmental cleanup program at Travis Air Force Base. Contents expressed herein are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, the Department of Defense, or the Department of the Air Force. Additional information about the program can be obtained from the public web site at <http://www.travis.af.mil/enviro>. Questions and comments about the program may be sent to this address:

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Questions and comments about the environmental web site may be sent to:

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# Can't Spell "Forward" w/out R.O.D.

Making decisions concerning the best way to clean up the environment is possibly the most important feature of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act of 1980 (known to most people as "Superfund"). Its importance grows when tax dollars are involved; my team is tasked to get the most cleanup out of every dollar, so proper planning and coordination are paramount to successfully carrying out this task.

Over the last dozen years, we have cleaned up groundwater under interim remedies that were selected in interim Records of Decision (RODs). A ROD is a decision document that describes the contamination that requires cleanup, the risk the contamination poses or could pose, the evaluation of the potential cleanup remedies, the remedies that were actually selected, and the cleanup levels that the remedies are expected to achieve.

Interim RODs are often used when it is not clear whether the selected remedies can achieve the assigned cleanup standards, but it is more important to start the cleanup rather than waiting until the final cleanup standards are selected. Because inflation erodes the purchasing power of every dollar, it is cost effective to start any cleanup as soon as possible and work on the final cleanup selections at a later date.

Here is one way of looking at the interim strategy: Suppose we are building a house but cannot decide on whether to put wall-to-wall carpet or tile on the bathroom floor. Instead of waiting until every decision about the house is made, the smart approach is to start the construction and pour the concrete foundation soonest and make the final decisions at a later date. Similarly, we started the interim groundwater cleanup to give ourselves more time to identify the final solutions.

Unfortunately, over time, the cost per pound of contaminant removed as well as maintenance costs increased, and it became apparent that the interim remedies were not going to be the final solution. A faster and more cost effective cleanup approach was needed.

In January 2013, the base issued a draft Groundwater ROD to the representatives



## VIEWPOINT

Mark H. Smith  
Travis AFB Restoration  
Program Manager

of the Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Toxic Substances Control, and the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board that describes the technologies that would best achieve the final cleanup standards. This ROD will allow us to transition from interim to final remedies. To identify the technologies that will work on Travis AFB, several demonstration projects were conducted over the last five years. The results of these projects gave all parties a high level of confidence in the technologies described in the draft ROD.

We have worked with our regulatory agency representatives to ensure that the rationale for the remedy selection in the ROD is clearly presented and that all decisions comply with the latest federal and State of California laws and regulations. After 13 months of agency negotiations and revisions to the contents of the ROD, the Air Force issued a draft final ROD to all parties for signature. Once signed, the ROD becomes a final, legally-binding document that gives the base the authority to implement the final remedies.

All parties agree that all technical issues had been resolved. That leaves the legal issues, and most of them have been resolved as well. The key word is "most," because Air Force and EPA attorneys do not agree with a few sentences in the ROD that deal with Land Use Controls (LUCs).

Here is the issue in a nutshell: the ROD contains all legal requirements that the issuing party, in this case the Air Force, must meet. LUCs are used to prevent contaminant exposure to people while the groundwater cleanup is in progress, so the restrictions on what can be done at a groundwater site must be accurately described and implemented. To make it easy to verify that the proper restrictions

## Viewpoint

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are in place, the EPA developed a checklist of items that must be in a ROD. The Air Force also has its LUC checklist, and the two checklists are not identical. This is the source of the disagreement.

At this point, there are two possibilities: (1) the EPA can accept the differences in the LUC checklists and sign the ROD, or (2) the EPA considers the LUC checklist differences to be significant enough to dispute them.

The term “dispute” is very important, because it initiates a specific process to resolve it. The April 2002 Guardian describes what can happen when a disagreement in a ROD occurs, the July 2002 Guardian provides a legal perspective on the topic, and the October 2002 Guardian describes in detail the dispute resolution process. To get copies of these and our other newsletters and restoration documents, feel free to download them from the News section of our public website:

<http://www.travis.af.mil/enviro/news/index.asp>

Obviously, this is not the first time that Travis AFB has gone down this path. The last time we had a ROD dispute with the EPA, it delayed the start of cleanup field work by 9 months.

This time, for contractual and funding reasons, a similar delay would create a lot of headaches for us. In a few months, we will wrap up our first Performance-based Contract (PBC) that we entered in fiscal year 2008. Let's call that contract PBC08. Once PBC08 ends, we will continue our work under the new PBC that we locked in last year. Let's call the new contract PBC13. PBC08 was written to develop and complete the GW ROD, and PBC13 was written to design and build the ROD's selected remedies. If EPA starts the dispute resolution process that lasts for a considerable amount of time, the ROD task in PBC08 will remain incomplete, and the follow-on tasks in PBC13 will be delayed to the point where they may not be completed before PBC13 expires.

## Got Records? We do!

Imagine that it is 2 o'clock in the morning, and you get the sudden urge to find out about the progress of the soil or groundwater cleanup at Travis AFB. Or, your son learned that his application to the Air Force Academy has been accepted, and you are curious as to the environmental conditions that are present there. Or, you want to move into a town near an Air Force base, and you want to find out about any contamination issues associated with the base that could potentially impact property values. What is a concerned citizen to do?

Luckily, there is a new source of information that can meet these needs, and all that is required to access this information is a computer, Internet access (preferably high speed), and the proper software. It is the Air Force Administrative Record (AR), and it can be found at the following Internet address:

<http://afceearsearch.vistatech-llc.com/>

The Environmental Protection Agency defines an AR as a collection of documents that forms the basis for an agency's decision, such as the selection of a response action at a Superfund site. AR documents include reports, technical memoranda, work plans, field sampling plans, remedial designs, meeting minutes, newsletters, official correspondence, proposed plans and decision documents (e.g., Records of Decision or Action Memoranda).

If an Air Force installation investigates and cleans up chemical or radiological contamination through an environmental restoration program, it is required by law to establish and maintain an AR. Over time, the number of documents in an AR can become fairly large, so most installations use a library database management software program to organize the documents and make it easier to find the one you want.

Originally, each installation placed its collection of paper documents in banker boxes and stored them in an office library. However, thanks to advances in software technology, it became possible to convert large documents into digital files that

can be stored on a compact disc (CD) or digital video disc (DVD). The most popular file standard that is used today is the portable document format (PDF).

Even with these technology advances, it was not easy to find desired information without going through a time-consuming request and retrieval process. That is why, as part of the Air Force Civil Engineer transformation that was described in the July 2013 Guardian, the Air Force Civil Engineer Center (AFCEC) consolidated the AR data for all bases and placed it in one website that is designed for public document searches and reviews.

When you type the AR Internet address into your browser, you are taken to an Introduction page that describes the AFCEC AR website. Click on the link at the bottom of this page, and you will see the main AR Search page. Select a facility from the Installation List on the left side of the webpage, and you will have access to all documents within that facility's AR.

To find a specific document, it helps to provide as much information about the document as possible. For example, if you select “Travis AFB” as the facility in which you are interested, type “meeting minutes” in the Subject or Title box, and click the Search button; you will get 183 records from which to choose. If you add “September” to the search, the number of returned records drops to 14.

Or, if you are only interested in meeting minutes between two dates, you can add those dates using the two calendar boxes before clicking the Search button.

Searches can also be narrowed by site, operable unit, or decision documents (RODs) by selecting the interested item from one of the three drop-down boxes in the center of the website. For example, if you type “Remedial Action” in the Subject or Title box, you get a list of 99 records. If you then select “DP039 Building 755” from the Sites box and click Search again, the Results list drops to 16 records.

So, give it a try. After a while, it will become easier to find the documents you are seeking. If you have any questions on the new website, please feel free to send us an email at [enviroa@travis.af.mil](mailto:enviroa@travis.af.mil).



Viewpoint

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As of the writing of this viewpoint, the Travis AFB Wing Commander had signed the ROD, and we are awaiting the regulatory agency representatives to do the same. EPA is still working to resolve this LUC checklist issue with the Air Force and has requested a 30-day extension (from 21 March to 21 April) to continue ROD negotiations at a higher level, so we still hope that the ROD will be signed before the start of the summer construction season, allowing us to move forward with our groundwater cleanup efforts. After the ROD is signed, we will issue a press release that explains how to get either a paper copy or an electronic copy of the ROD.

I will keep you posted.



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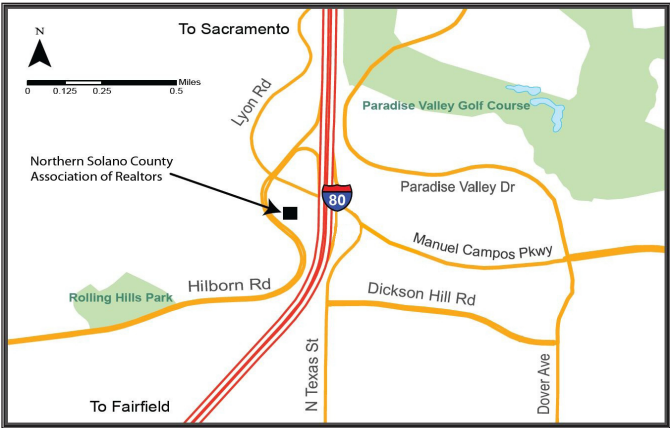


Travis AFB  
Restoration  
Advisory  
Board  
Meeting

April 17, 2014  
7 p.m.

Postponed

Northern Solano County  
Association of Realtors  
3690 Hilborn Road  
Fairfield, CA



LOCATION OF INFORMATION REPOSITORIES

<b>Vacaville Public Library</b> 1020 Ulatis Drive Vacaville, CA 95688  (707) 449-6290  <b>Monday-Thursday:</b> 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. <b>Friday-Saturday:</b> 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. <b>Sunday:</b> 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.	<b>Fairfield-Suisun Com. Library</b> 1150 Kentucky Street Fairfield, CA 94533  (707) 421-6500  <b>Monday-Thursday:</b> 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. <b>Friday-Saturday:</b> 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. <b>Sunday:</b> 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.	<b>Mitchell Memorial Library</b> 510 Travis Boulevard Travis AFB, CA 94535  (707) 424-3279  <b>Monday-Thursday:</b> 10 a.m. - 9 p.m. <b>Friday:</b> Closed <b>Saturday:</b> 12 p.m. - 6 p.m. <b>Sunday:</b> 12 p.m. - 6 p.m.
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If you would like more information or need special accommodations for the RAB meeting, please contact Mark Smith, (707) 424-8871. You can also view our web site at <http://www.travis.af.mil/enviro>

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